SAKSHI BHALLA

Institute of Communications Research (ICR), University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
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EDUCATION

Ph.D. in **Media & Communications**
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Honors: *Phi Kappa Phi*
2021 onwards
Champaign, IL

Master of Science in **Statistics (Applied)**
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Ongoing
Champaign, IL

Master of Arts in **Linguistics**
Jawaharlal Nehru University
JNU Entrance Test: *All India Rank 1*
Thesis: *Sociolinguistic Profile of Ahirani* (a rare language spoken in Maharashtra, India)
2018-2020
New Delhi, India

Bachelor of Arts, *with Honors* in **Journalism**
Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi
2012-2015
New Delhi, India

PUBLICATIONS

Peer-reviewed articles

1. **Bhalla, S.**, R. Ray & H. Taneja. (2024). When news is entertainment: Explaining the persistence of misinformation through the information environment. *Information, Communication & Society.*
https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2024.2406819

2. Khan, A., S. Natarajan, & **S. Bhalla**. (2021). Climate Strikes in Millennial India: Social Capital and "On-Ground" Networks in Digital-First Movements. *Communication, Culture & Critique.*
https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tcab035

Forthcoming

1. **Bhalla, S.** & H. Taneja. (2025). User-defined Repertoires. In Nai, A., Grömping, M., Wirz, D. (Eds). *Elgar Encyclopedia of Political Communication.* Edward Elgar Publishing.

2. **Bhalla, S.**, M. Nelson & M. Spikes. (forthcoming). Classroom Contexts: Teachers Talk Teaching Media Literacy. *Journal of Media Literacy Education.*

IN PROGRESS

Fact checkers fail to overcome partisan divides in two of the world's largest democracies
R&R; with *Harsh Taneja & Rik Ray*

Beyond Preferences: Contextual Influences on News Diets in High-Choice Environments
Under review; with *Harsh Taneja*

News(paper) Flows: A spatial examination of local newspaper circulation
Under review

Complements or competitors? Examining human-AI interactions on Sina Weibo
Under review; with Maggie Zhang

AWARDS/ FELLOWSHIPS	*Illinois Distinguished Fellowship* ($75,000)	2021-25
	SPARK Award for Promising Graduate Students, American Political Science Association (Political Communication Section)	2024
	Local Journalism Researchers Workshop Travel Grant, Duke University	2024
	National Center for Supercomputing Applications (750,000 core hours)	2023
	Institute of Communications Research Graduate Travel Grant	2022-2024
	Prime Minister's Scholarship, Government of India	2012

CONFERENCE TALKS

Bhalla, S. & Harsh Taneja (2024). Dissecting Selectivity in a fragmented media environment: A novel approach. *APSA Political Communication Preconference.*

Bhalla, S. & Harsh Taneja (2024). Entwined Realms: Media Contexts and Information Choice. *American Political Science Association.* [iPoster]

Bhalla, S., Rik Ray & Harsh Taneja (2024). When News is Entertainment. *International Communication Division: Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC)*, Philadelphia, PA. [Poster]

Bhalla, S. & Harsh Taneja (2024). Beyond Preferences: Contextual Influences on News Diets in High-Choice Environments. *Political Communication Division: Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC)*, Philadelphia, PA. [Poster]

Bhalla, S. & Harsh Taneja (2024). Entwined Realms: Examining Media Contexts and News Choice. *A Computational Turn in Journalism: Opportunities and Challenges in a Cross-Disciplinary Field: ICA 2024 Preconference*, Singapore/Virtual.

Bhalla, S., JungHwan Yang, Harsh Taneja, Pablo Barbera, Andy Guess & Simon Munzert (2023). Measuring the consumption of political news: Patterns of selectivity and avoidance. *News avoidance, resistance, and related audience practices: definitions, predictors, and consequences: ICA 2023 Preconference*, Toronto, Canada.

Bhalla, S., Michelle Nelson & Michael Spikes (2023). Context Matters: Teachers Talk Media Literacy in the Classroom. *Mass Communication Division: International Communication Association*, Toronto, Canada. [Full paper]

Bhalla, S., Rik Ray & Harsh Taneja (2022). Foregrounding contexts in disinformation studies: A study on the failure of fact-checking in India. *What Comes After Disinformation Studies? International Communication Association Preconference*, Paris, France.

Ray, R., **Sakshi Bhalla** & Harsh Taneja (2022). Fact checkers fail to overcome partisan divides in two of the world's largest democracies. *Political Communication Division: International Communication Association*, Paris, France. [Full Paper]

Bhalla, S. (2021). Foregrounding Space and context: A discursive study of fact-checking in India.*South Asia Communication Association: Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC)*, Virtual.

Ray, R., **Sakshi Bhalla** & Harsh Taneja (2021). Do fact-checkers overcome partisan divides: An investigation of Indian Twitter users.*International Communication Association*, Virtual. [Full paper]

Bhalla, S. (2018). The Global in the Local: Inter-cultural Translation in the Backdrop of Global Advertising.*International Symposium on Linguistics Across Disciplines*, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, India. [Full paper]

WORKSHOPS   **Bhalla, S.** (2024). Diffused News Cultures: Explaining news cultures through spatial relationships. *Local Journalism Researchers Workshop*, Chapel-Hill, NC.

PRESENTATIONS   **Bhalla, S.** (2024). Navigating Narratives: Selective Exposure to Indian Journalists.*Social Media and Society in India*, Ann Arbor, MI/Virtual.

Bhalla, S. (2022). How politics and platforms skew media literacy instruction. *Institute of Communications Research at University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign*.

Bhalla, S. (2021). Ahirani: A Sociolinguistic Profile. *Centre for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign*.

Bhalla, S. (2021). Foregrounding Space and context: A discursive study of fact-checking in India.*The Great Mediation (University of Chicago)*.

Bhalla, S. (2019). The Technological Mediation of Political Rhetoric on Twitter.*Mediated Campaigns and Unmediated Politics in Millennial India*, Centre de Sciences Humaines, New Delhi.

INVITED TALKS   **Bhalla, S.** (2024). News and Information Consumption in the Contemporary Media Environment: Are Fact-Checkers Enough? *Jio Institute Masterclass*. with *Harsh Taneja & Rik Ray*

RESEARCH/
TEACHING
EXPERIENCE

Pre-doctoral Fellow   2021 - Present
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign   Champaign, IL

- **Teaching Assistant:** Intro to popular TV and movies (MACS 100), Intro to Advertising (ADV 150)
- **Research Assistant:** Examined approaches to media literacy used by high-school teachers in the state of Illinois through semi-structured interviews with the IMEDIA research group.

Graduate Student Mentor   2022-23
Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program (URAP), University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
- Introduced undergraduate students to research on media and communications, guiding them on projects. Final project presented at Undergraduate Research Symposium.

Student Researcher   Jun-Aug 2021
Open Markets Institute (Center for Liberty and Journalism)

- Worked with the Illinois Project team and collected data for multiple research projects.

Research Analyst Jan 2021-Apr 2021

Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)

- Collection and analysis of online survey data to study online and on-ground protest networks in India. The findings have been published in *Communication, Culture & Critique*.

Research Assistant 2019-20

Indraprastha Institute of Information & Technology

- Studied media parallelism and framing of policy discourse across news publications during the General Election of 2019 in India..

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Member, International Communication Association

Member, American Political Science Association

Affiliate, Center for Information, Technology, and Public Life (CITAP)

IN THE MEDIA

Interview on Centre for Innovation & Sustainability in Local Media. Q&A with media and politics researcher, Sakshi Bhalla
Also syndicated by Editor & Publisher

DATA SCIENCE & TECH

Languages: R (proficient), Python (beginner), HTML/CSS (intermediate)

Programs: UCINET, LaTeX

Statistical Modelling: Statistical inference, causal inference, network analysis and statistical modelling, spatial econometrics, machine learning

SERVICE TO THE DEPARTMENT

ICR Graduate Student Conference: **Organizing team & Reviewer** 2023
ICR **Graduate Student Representative** 2023-24

SERVICE TO THE DISCIPLINE

Reviewing for annual conferences:
International Communication Association (Political Communication, Computational Methods, Journalism Studies, and Human-Machine Communication divisions)
Reviewing for journals: *Journalism Studies, Humanities and Social Sciences Communications - Nature*

OTHER CERTIFICATIONS

Role of Media in Conflict and Peace 2014
Certification workshop offered by Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace.

Journalism as a Public Good 2014
Short term certificate course offered by Lady Shri Ram College for Women.

Film Appreciation 2013
Six-week certification offered by Lady Shri Ram College for Women.

NATURAL LANGUAGES

English (proficient), Hindi (proficient), Punjabi (intermediate), Ahirani (beginner)

RELEVANT COURSEWORK	**University of Illinois**
	Theory: *States, Space and Informatization; Public Opinion & Public Sphere; Mass Media and the Individual; Political Campaigns Analysis; History, Politics, and Identity; Communication & Public Opinion; Political Communication.*
	Method: *Network Analysis; Computational Political Communication; Postcolonial Theory and Methods; Quantitative Research Methods; Statistics and Probability I & II; Statistical Modelling I; Spatial Econometrics and Causal Inference; Hierarchical Linear Modelling; Statistical Learning; Time Series Analysis.*
	Jawaharlal Nehru University
	Sociolinguistics; Semiotics and the Philosophy of Structures; Issues in Linguistic Theory; Forms of Media: Senses, Mediation and Perception; Field Methods; Media, Politics and Violence; Visual Histories; Media in India.
	Lady Shri Ram College for Women
	Media and Culture Studies; New Media Technologies; Indian State and Democratic Polity; International Politics; Advertising and Public Relations; Human Rights, Gender and Environment; Seminar on Urban Spatiality; Communication Research Methods.

NON-ACADEMIC WORK EXPERIENCE	**Junior Writer – Senior Writer**	Mar 2016-Jul 2018
	Thinkstr Consultancy Pvt. Ltd.	Gurgaon, India
	• Advertising and strategy for a battery of brands and organizations.	
	• Longhand Awards shortlist.	
	Associate	Jun 2015-Feb 2016
	D. E. Shaw & Co.	Hyderabad, India

INTERNSHIPS AND PROJECTS	**Summer Intern**	Summer 2014
	The Coca-Cola Company (India and Southwest Asia HQ)	Gurgaon, India
	• Worked with the Public Affairs and Communication Department. Assisted with the strategy of the TCCC's Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives and outreach to customers.	
	Associate Editor	2012-2014
	Counter-talk (The annual journal of Department of Journalism, Lady Shri Ram College)	New Delhi, India

REFERENCES   Available upon request.